GHOST RIDER

Johnny Blaze is cursed, doomed to live life as the Ghost Rider, a brutal spirit that exists only to mete out vengeance against evildoers. After years spent being a pawn of hell, Blaze has recently learned that the Ghost Rider is actually a weapon of Heaven, bonded to him by the renegade angel Zadkiel. At long last, Blaze knows exactly who's responsible for ruining his life. But the only question is, how does he get revenge on an angel?

Blaze has come to a maximum security prison in Texas to track down a jailed priest he hopes can provide some answers regarding Zadkiel. But a prison guard secretly working for Zadkiel has sparked a riot and released the prison's most dangerous inmate, a mountain of a man known simply as The Deacon.

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DEACON?
DEACON, WHERE'D YOU GO?
UH... MR. "THE DEACON," SIR?
AMEN.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THESE TWO SINNERS WERE IN DESPERATE NEED OF SALVATION.
SO WE PRAYED TOGETHER.
NOW THEY ART IN PARADISE.
THUMP
THUMP
FEELS SO GREAT TO BE OUT IN THE WORLD AGAIN, SPREADING THE GOSPEL. THIS PRISON IS FILLED WITH ALL MANNER OF SINNERS...
ALL OF THEM BEGGING TO BE REDEEMED.
CHA-CHAKK

HOLD ON NOW. OUR LORD ZADKIEL HAS A FEW *SPECIFIC* TARGETS IN MIND FOR YOU THIS TIME.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO NEED MORE THAN JUST THAT SHOTGUN.
BEHOLD THE ARK OF BEZALEL.
SIMPLY REACH INSIDE AND KNOW THAT THE LORD WILL PROVIDE WHATEVER YOU MAY NEED.
THE ELIXIR OF THE ROCK OF ETAM.
ONE SIP GRANTS YOU THE STRENGTH OF SAMSON.
WAIT, THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...
HALLELUJAH, BROTHER.
SAMSON SLEW A THOUSAND PHILISTINES WITH THE JAWBONE OF AN ASS...

GOD DON'T LIVE ON CELL BLOCK D
CONCLUSION
IMAGINE WHAT I CAN DO WITH THESE.
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I WAS ONE HELLUVA PREACHER.
CELL BLOCK 1
DYNAMIC. FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. THAT'S WHY THEY RECRUITED ME.
THEY CALLED THEMSELVES THE FIRST CHURCH OF THE NEW DAWN. I BECAME THEIR PASTOR, AND RIGHT AWAY THE CHURCH BEGAN GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS.
I DIDN'T DETECT ANYTHING UNUSUAL AT FIRST. NOT UNTIL PEOPLE STARTED DYING.
TURNS OUT, THE CHURCH WASN'T REALLY INTERESTED IN BRINGING LOST SOULS TO JESUS. THEY WEREN'T EVEN SERVING GOD. THEY WERE RECRUITING FOR THE ARMY OF THE ANGEL ZADKIEL, BRAINWASHING PEOPLE TO SERVE AS HIS EARTHLY WARRIORS. KILLING IN HIS NAME.
THEIR GOAL: TO AID ZADKIEL IN SEIZING THE THRONE OF HEAVEN FOR HIMSELF.
OF COURSE, I WAS HORRIFIED WHEN I REALIZED THE TRUTH. AND I KNEW THAT NO MATTER WHAT, I COULDN'T ALLOW ANYMORE LOST SOULS TO BE LED ASTRAY.
SO ONE SUNDAY I PREACHED MY SERMON ON JOSHUA AND THE BATTLE OF JERICHO AND HOW THE ISRAELITES SLAUGHTERED EVERY LIVING THING INSIDE THE CITY.
AND THEN I TOOK OUT MY MACHINE GUN AND...

I DID WHAT I FELT I HAD TO. AND THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
HOW ABOUT YOU?
I'M HERE BECAUSE I ROUSTED A GROUP OF SATANISTS IN DENVER AND HAD 'EM TAKE TURNS BEING DRAGGED BEHIND MY BIKE UNTIL THEY TOLD ME EVERYTHING THEY KNEW ABOUT ZADKIEL.
TURNS OUT ALL THEY KNEW WAS *YOU*.
IT'S TRUE, I MADE A DEAL WITH THE SATANISTS. THE DEVIL GETS MY SOUL AND IN RETURN, I GET PROTECTION FROM ZADKIEL'S EARTHLY ASSASSINS AND THE ASSURANCE THAT WHEN I DIE, I'LL NEVER HAVE TO SEE *HEAVEN*.
DEVIL
JUST THE IDEA OF BEING TRAPPED FOR ALL ETERNITY WITH ZADKIEL AND HIS MINIONS...WELL, LET'S JUST SAY, I'D RATHER TAKE MY CHANCES IN HELL.

LOOK AT ME, PAL. IF I HAD ANY IDEA HOW TO FIGHT AGAINST ZADKIEL, DO YOU THINK I'D BE HERE NOW, WITH THREE DOZEN MURDERS ON MY CONSCIENCE?
HIS PLANS HAVE BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR MILLENNIA. HE HAS AN ARMY OF ZEALOTS WHO WILL NOT HESITATE TO KILL OR DIE FOR HIM.
WHATEVER'S GONNA HAPPEN NOW, IT'S OUT OF OUR HANDS.
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HEAVEN OR ZADKIEL'S PLANS.
I JUST WANNA KNOW HOW TO GET TO HIM.
HOW TO GET TO ZADKIEL? YOU WANNA KNOW HOW TO *ASSASSINATE* AN *ANGEL*?
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA DO, KID, STORM THE PEARLY GATES, GUNS A-BLAZIN'?
YOU'RE CRAZY.
THIS IS *HEAVEN* WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. THERE'S NO SECRET PORTAL HIDDEN IN THE BACK OF AN OLD WARDROBE. NO MAGIC RAINBOW BRIDGE.
YOU WANNA MEET ZADKIEL FACE TO FACE? GO BECOME A MONK AND THEN WAIT AROUND TO DIE. OTHERWISE, YOU'RE STUCK DOWN HERE WITH THE REST OF US.

JOHNNY BLAZE IN HEAVEN? THAT'LL BE THE DAY.
I DON'T BUY IT. THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO GET TO HIM.
THIS TIME TOMORROW, ZADKIEL COULD BE SITTING ON THE THRONE OF HEAVEN. OMNIPOTENT. UNTOUCHABLE.
AS WE SPEAK, HIS PEOPLE ARE WORKING TO CONSOLIDATE THE POWERS OF THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE. AFTER THAT, IT'S ALL OVE--
WHAT?
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE. YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?
NO...NO, YOU *ARE* ONE, AREN'T YOU?
HA, IN THAT CASE, MR. BLAZE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GETTING TO ZADKIEL...
'CAUSE HE'LL BE COMIN' FOR *YOU*.

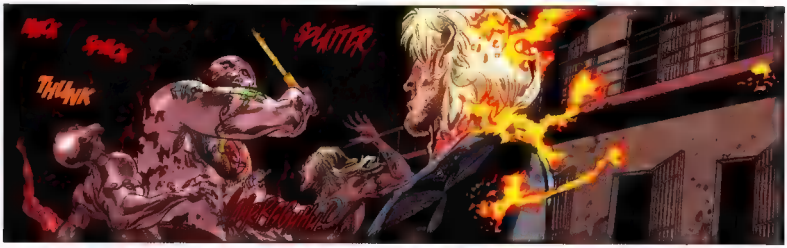
CRUNCH
WHETHER OR NOT YOU CARE ABOUT ZADKIEL'S PLANS, BLAZE, LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALREADY A PART OF THEM.
IF I WAS YOU...
I'D START MAKING MY PEACE WITH HELL.
UH...

WHACK

FORGIVE ME, FATHER.

YOU BOYS ARE DEVIL WORSHIPPERS, AREN'T YOU?
DON'T WORRY, I CAN STILL SAVE YOU.

WE'RE JUST GONNA HAVE TO PRAY EXTRA HARD IS ALL.

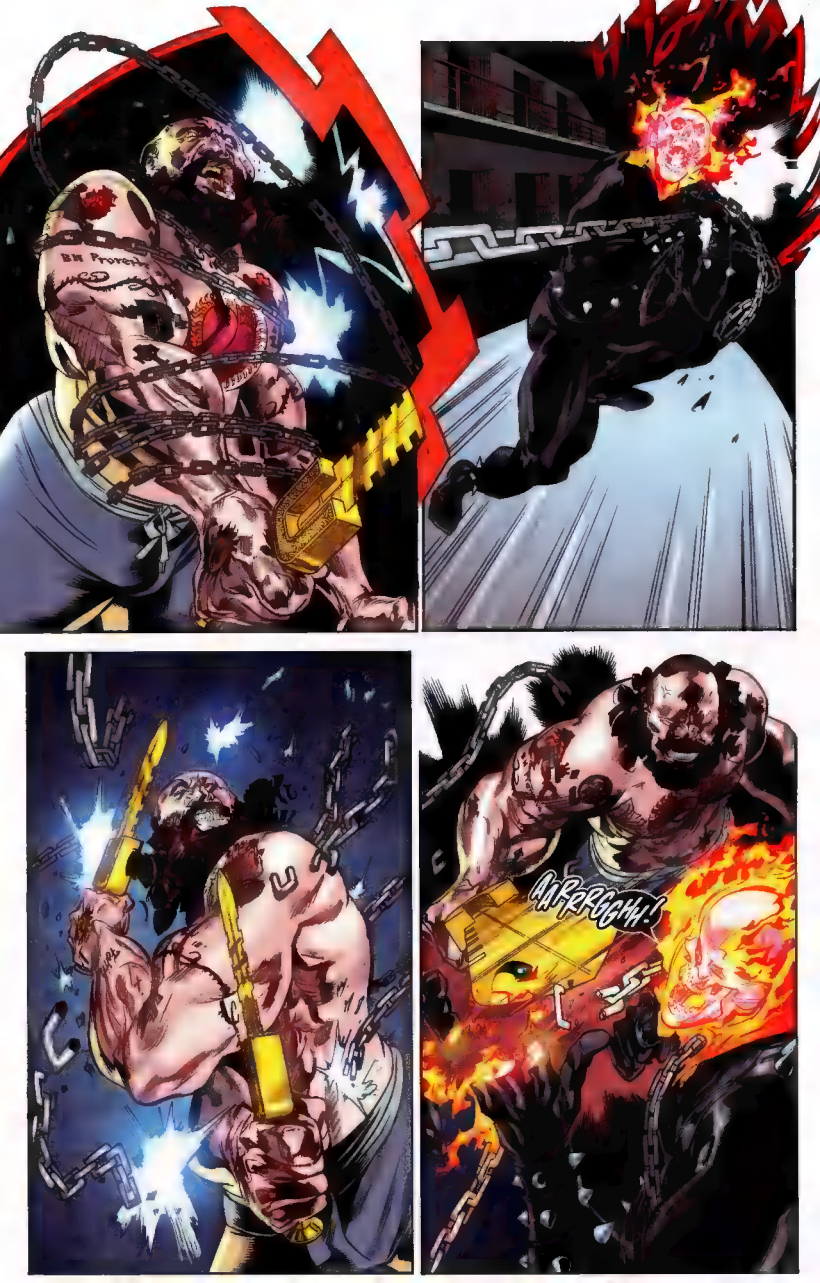

SPLATTER
THWUNK

SPANG
SLASH
SPLUNK

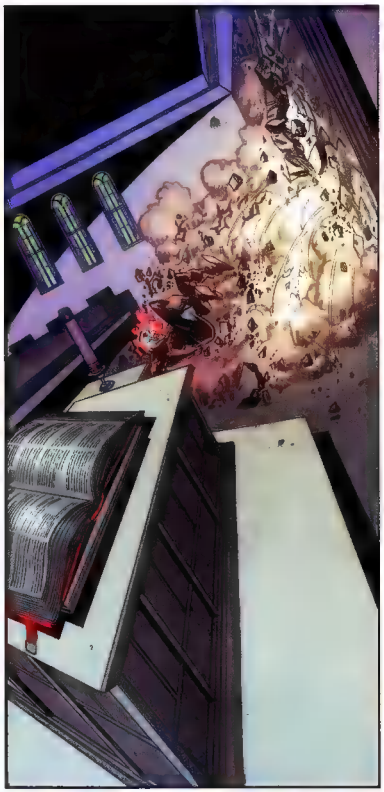
YOU'RE ONE OF ZADKIEL'S, AREN'T YOU?
YOU'RE GONNA TAKE ME TO HIM.

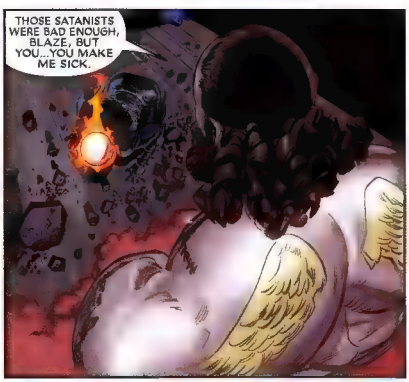
I SERVE THE HEAVENLY HOST. YOU WANNA MEET THEM? I'LL BE GLAD TO SHOW YOU THE WAY, BROTHER.

COME... LET US PRAY.


AARRRGGHH!

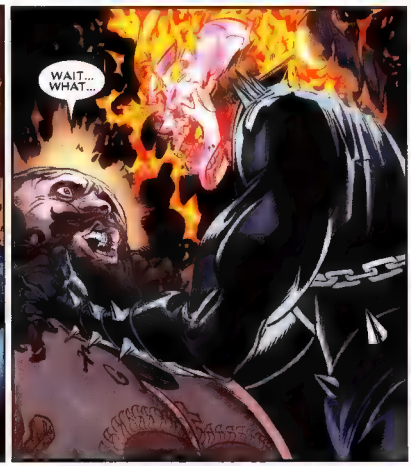
YOU... YOU CUT ME...
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
FWWOOOOSSHH
YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW, BLAZE...
ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH HEAVEN ON YOUR SIDE.
CRASH




THOSE SATANISTS WERE BAD ENOUGH, BLAZE, BUT YOU...YOU MAKE ME SICK.

LOOK AT ALL THE POWER THAT HEAVEN HAS GIVEN YOU AND STILL YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON THEM.
THAT MAKES YOU THE WORST SINNER OF ALL.

YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT SINS, FAILLETH HAVE A LOOK AT YOURS.

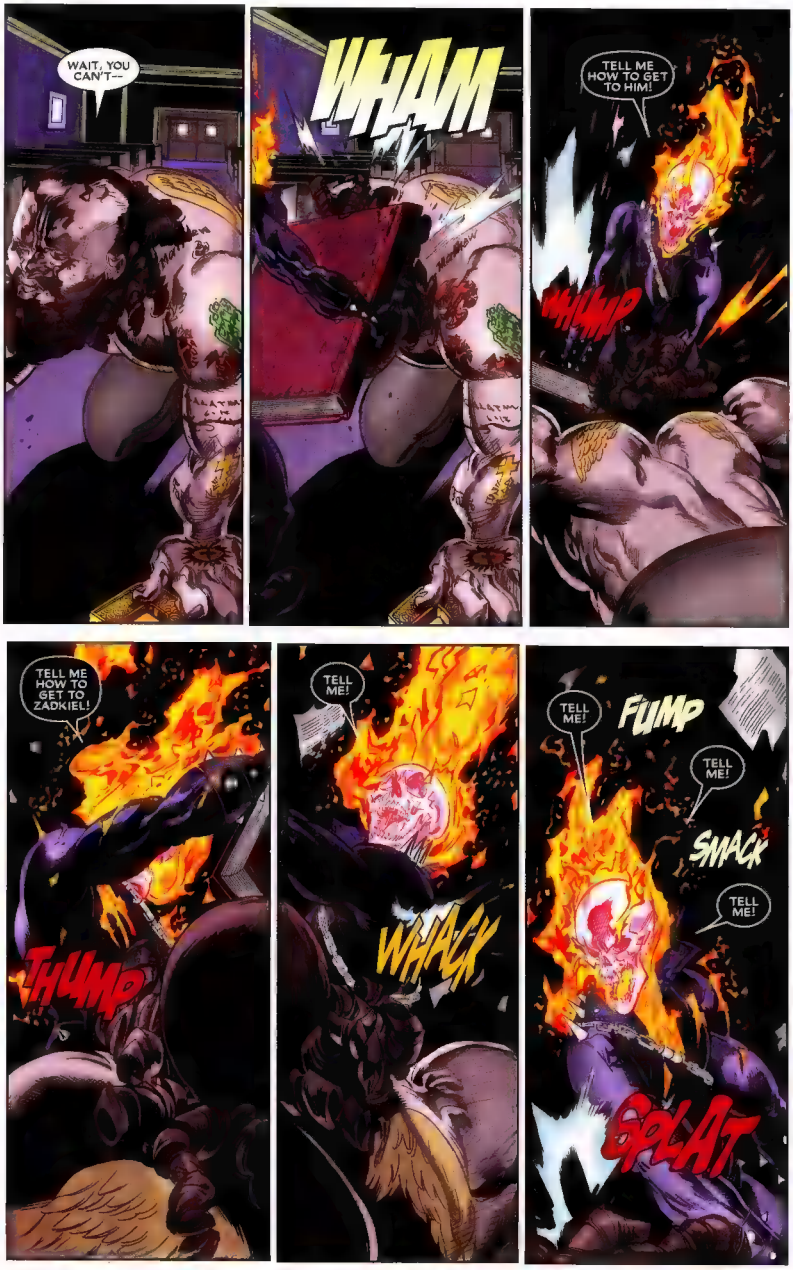

WAIT... WHAT...

IT'S CALLED THE PENANCE STARE.
IT MAKES YOU FEEL ALL THE PAIN YOU'VE EVER CAUSED. ALL THE MISERY.
EVERY [illegible] EVERY CRIME YOU'VE EVER COMMITTED IN THE NAME OF GOD. EVERY PERSON YOU'VE EVER CRIPPLED OR MAIMED FOR THEIR SUPPOSED SIN. FOR FAILING TO LIVE THEIR [illegible] ACCORDING TO YOUR ARCHAIC PRINCIPLES.
TELL ME, YOU PATHETIC LITTLE WRETCH...
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
HEH
IT TICKLES.
GGAHHRRRHH!
RRR
THUNK

YOUR STARE DOESN'T WORK ON ME, BLAZE. BECAUSE I'M NOT BOTHERED BY ANYTHING I'VE DONE.
SIN DESERVES TO BE PUNISHED, AND SINNERS MUST BE MADE TO REPENT.
YOU, HOWEVER, HAVE NOW PROVED YOURSELF BEYOND REDEMPTION.
SO IT'S SIMPLY TIME FOR YOU TO *DIE*.
KRASH

THE HOLY BIBLE
IF YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE YOUR LAST CONFESSION, I WILL HEAR IT NOW.
GO TO HELL.
BLASPHEMOUS TO THE END.
SO BE IT.
THE HOLY BIBLE

HOW *DARE* YOU, BLAZE! HOW DARE YOU DEFEND YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY WORD!
DROP THAT THIS INSTANT! *THE BIBLE IS NOT A WEAPON!*
WHAM
THE HELL YOU SAY.


WAIT, YOU CAN'T--
WHAM
TELL ME HOW TO GET TO HIM!
WHUMP
TELL ME HOW TO GET TO ZADKIEL!
THUMP
TELL ME!
WHACK
TELL ME!
FUMP
TELL ME!
SMACK
TELL ME!
SPLAT

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?
YES... ALL IS AS IT SHOULD BE, LORD ZADKIEL...
THY WILL BE DONE.

CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I TOOK A BEATING LIKE THAT.
CAN'T CHANGE BACK INTO HUMAN FORM OR MY INJURIES WOULD KILL ME.
THAT MEANS THE GHOST RIDER IS CALLING THE SHOTS. THAT MEANS THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IS CRYING OUT FOR THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENT TO BE AVENGED.
WHICH SUDDENLY MAKES THIS HERE PRISON...
THE LAST PLACE ON EARTH YOU'D WANNA BE IF YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING EVIL.
DAMN, BUT YOU'RE ONE UGLY SON OF A CUSS. WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOUR FACE?
THIS IS WHAT I LOOK LIKE WHEN I'M SMILING.

EIGHT MINUTES LATER:
HANDS IN THE AIR OR YOU WILL BE SHOT! THIS RIOT IS OV--
THE HELL... WHAT IN GOD'S NAME COULD'VE DONE THIS?
PROBABLY THE SAME THING THAT DID THAT.

NEXT ISSUE:
THE SECOND COMING
OF DANIEL KETCH

GHOST WRITERS

GHOST WRITERS:

How about that for an issue #25 throwdown, huh? It's been awhile since we've seen Ol' Flamehead take such a beating, but don't worry, he'll be healed up just in time for next issue, when he'll have even bigger problems to face. But more on that later. For now, let's get on to your letters.

Hey there Ghost Writers!

My name is Carlos Senna, I'm a journalism major from Brazil and a life-long fan of Ol' Flamehead. And let me tell you: Congrats all around!

Jason Aaron has hit this comic book like a bat out of Hell! His Ghostie is the best I've read since... Well, ever! And Tan Eng Huat was a great addition to the team, his style is a perfect match for the book. I bought the "Hell Bent and Heaven Bound" arc and thought it was awesome, but I still wanted to know how far you guys were going to push it. And you opened issue #24 with a whole congregation gunned down by their priest inside a church. You did it! Without batting an eyelash! It was one of the most shocking, unapologetic, compelling displays of pure evil I've seen in a comic book in a long time. And the first scene of Blaze locked up in solitary confinement with "the meanest, toughest hombre in the East Texas prison system" was a real stroke of genius! The dialogue, Blaze's posture, the whole scene, it was all perfect. That's MY Ghost Rider. The meanest, scariest beacon of light amongst the darkness of the world. Just never let up and, in the words of the Hulk, never stop making them pay! Can't wait to see what you guys do next.

Carlos Senna
Brazil

P.S. Please, guys, print my e-mail. I've been writing to the letters page of Ghost Rider since before Ghost Rider vol. 2 ended and never got anything in. What can I say? It's a dream of mine. Thanks!

We're always happy to make dreams come true here in Ghost Rider land, Carlos. We're like the Make-A-Wish Foundation, only with motorcycles and flaming skulls. Thanks for reading.

Dear Ghost Writers,

I wanted to say that as I write this, I just read issue #22 and I have a few thoughts flying in my head. While it certainly seems you're capable of writing intriguing, long-lasting stories with significant depth, Mr. Aaron, I have two complaints. The first, and less important, is Ghost Rider's power. The fact that those nurses weren't killed by his blast back in #21 doesn't speak to the Spirit of Vengeance's true power, almost like you're trying to undersell him. Of course, you're just trying to make the stories more compelling by having an element of risk but will we see Blaze getting an even challenge from more worthy foes in the future?

My second complaint is your depiction of angels and Heaven. I don't mean to be "that guy" and I have no plans to protest GR or Marvel but as a Christian, it almost seems like you're coming down on Christianity. Granted, you've stated that Zadkiel, not God, is the bad guy and issue #22 didn't have any questionable elements in it. A little confirmation that you're not attacking anyone but fictional characters would be appreciated.

Those two nagments (like a comments but I'm nagging, patent-pending) aside, your fight scenes are awesome when they're not selling GR short and are delightfully brutal. A small scene in #22 also makes me think this particular GR arc is going to do big things for ol' Flamehead that'll be most exciting. I just have two questions (here I go again...). Will you ever shed some light on what happened to Roxanne and those kids Blaze supposedly had? And do you plant to delve into who this new GR is. Is it Zarathos in Blaze again or is it a new deity we've never seen before? And if it's a new guy, what's his back-story. I've always loved GR (some Christian, huh?) but right now I'm confused as to his nature and can't seem to find any answers wherever I look.

Sean
New Jersey

Thanks for raising some good points, Sean. In response to your first comment, that blast back in issue #21 didn't kill all of the nurses quite simply because the Ghost Rider is not a mass murderer, and as has been said before, his fire is "cold to the touch...meant to scald the soul, not the body." Regarding your second complaint, no, we are most definitely not coming down on Christians or Christianity. While I am using Christian mythology, such as angels, to tell my story, that's something that the GHOST RIDER books have always done. And as we've shown, Zadkiel, our villain, is a renegade angel and is no longer carrying out the wishes of God or Heaven. Like Lucifer before him, Zadkiel now has his own agenda.

In answer to your questions: 1) No plans right now to bring back Roxanne or Blaze's kids. As far as Blaze knows, they're all dead. 2) We won't be seeing Zarathos anytime soon either, but we definitely will be learning more about the nature of the Spirit of Vengeance. Stay tuned.

Dear Ghost Rider crew,

Hi, my name is Dan. I just wanted to write in and say thanks for bringing Ghost Rider back. I first got into Ghost Rider back when issue #2 of the Dan Ketch series came out. I was in 8th grade at the time. Reading #2 of that series got me hooked and I now own pretty much every issue of Ghost Rider ever made including crossovers. I even had a letter printed in issue #30 of the Ketch series. I will be getting a Ghost Rider tattoo soon also. So being a big Ketch fan I was very excited when I saw him appear once again in the pages of this new series. The art and story are awesome. It would be very cool to see some of the old villains show up like Deathwatch, Blackout and of course Vengeance!! But no matter what you do I will be reading forever. Long live Ghost Rider!!

Dan
Sartell, MN

So now you've had TWO letters printed in GHOST RIDER, Dan. Keep reading and writing. And look no further than next issue for the return of Blackout, plus some other members of Ghost Rider's rogues' gallery.

Interesting issue I must say, referring to #24, can't wait to see what goes down in the next one! Anyway keep up the good work and here's my cast for my Ghost Rider movie and my reason's for casting them! Hope you like it.

1. Kurt Russell -- Johnny Blaze: Sure he's old, but he can still pull off a bad ass!! Deathproof? Plus the '90's Johnny Blaze always reminded me of him.

2. Sheri Moon Zombie -- Roxanne: I enjoyed her performance in the Halloween remake, very emotional and normal, far from Baby Firefly, plus she was in the fake Grindhouse trailer.

3. Josh Hartnett -- Danny Ketch: He's worked with Robert Rodriguez! Sin City, very cool but small performance. He's also got the boy next door look down, somewhat.

4. Bruce Campbell -- Satan: If there's anyone who can play a devil with a twisted sense of humor, it's Bruce! Hands down, my pick for Satan!

5. Robert Englund -- The Cannibal: He has a knack for playing off the wall and crazy characters, and he's Freddy Krueger.

6. Louise Fletcher -- The Head Nurse: She was Nurse Ratched, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, need I say more!!

Andrew
Lawrence, KS

The first entry in our new contest, and it's a doozy. Bruce Campbell and Louise Fletcher are particularly inspired choices. Well done, Andrew.

That's all for this month. Tune in next issue for "The Second Coming of Daniel Ketch," which also features guest appearances by Blackout, The Orb, Doghead and Death Ninja. Plus the debut of an important new character and the long-awaited return of...wait a second, I don't wanna give away all the surprises. You'll just have to read it for yourself!

Jason Aaron
June 2008

"Someday the mountain might get him but the law never will."

NEXT ISSUE

THE SECOND COMING OF DANNY KETCH!

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